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A summary of significant events of interest to USDA management

FEB 14 '79 Issue #39
June 25, 1976

USDA BUILDINGS CLOSED FOR HOLIDAY..... USDA Washington complex will be closed to non-USDA and non-essential GSA officials and personnel from close of business July 2 until 6:00 A.M. July 6. Strict personnel identification requirements and inspection of all incoming packages will be in effect during this period. (Contact: Carl Tant, OI, ext. 76001.)

PUBLIC-USE REPORTS REDUCED BY MORE THAN 10 PERCENT..... The Department's effort to reduce the number of public-use reports resulted in achieving a 10 percent reduction by June 10. The October 31 base, was 794 repetitive reports and 55 single-time reports. By June 10, the Department's agencies had eliminated 71 repetitive and 14 single-time reports. Agencies which had achieved reductions of 10 percent or more by June 10 include ARS, ASCS, ES, FS, FCS, REA and SCS. Final reports from each agency, due June 23, will undoubtedly add several agencies to this list and will bring the reduction for the Department to over 10 percent. (Contact: Richard P. Small, SRS, ext. 76201.)

WASHINGTON SPACE UTILIZATION..... Pre-proposal conference held by GSA on Wednesday, June 23, for distribution of solicitation information to prospective consultant contractors and for detailed discussion of services requested. Approximately 50 prospective contractors attended, as well as Terry Chambers, Deputy Administrator of GSA, and Assistant Secretary Bolduc.

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Contractor will provide (a) complete information on current space assignments and needs, (b) a report of GSA and USDA goals, objectives and constraints affecting space in the USDA Downtown Complex, (c) a short range (one year) plan of action, (d) a prototype detailed space plan for about 15,000 square feet of space for one USDA organization, and consultation during implementation of the short range plan. (Contact: Pete Gagnon, 00, ext. 73141.)

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/AUDITS AND INVESTIGATIONS..... Recent amendments to the Freedom of Information Act have encouraged ever-increasing requests for audit and investigation reports. OA, OI and agencies subject to audit and investigation must assume responsibility for producing reports which will stand up under close scrutiny. This matter requires careful attention at all management levels in OA, OI and USDA agencies. (Contact: B. Robinson, OA, ext. 77671, L. Free, OI, ext. 76915.)

OP STUDY OF AGENCY EEO COMMITTEES.....As of June 19 only five agencies, FS, FNS, EMSC, P&SA and OEO submitted comments on the recommendations on EEO Committees. (Contact: Linda Brick, OP, ext. 73547.)

USDA EEO COMMITTEE REPORT.....As a result of meetings with each Assistant Secretary and Agency Head, the USDA EEO Committee made recommendations on recruitment, upward mobility, EEO complaints and evaluation of EEO efforts. A synopsis of the Committee's recommendations and the Department's response will be sent to all Assistant Secretaries. (Contact: Linda Brick, OP, ext. 73547.)

CSC TASK FORCE ON EEO/MERIT SYSTEM INTERFACE MAKES PRELIMINARY RECOMMENDATIONS.....The major recommendations for CSC action were:

- ...Establish an Intra-CSC EEO Coordination Group to assure a cohesive approach to the agencies on EEO.
- ...Take a more realistic approach in CSC public assurances on EEO on what can be achieved within the current system.
- ...Encourage greater upward mobility efforts, including the possibility of interdepartmental programs.
- ...Reconsider the use of PACE for some occupations.
- ...Extend the noncompetitive conversion provisions for co-op education students in baccalaureate programs to those in two year colleges.
- ...Determine if CSC can legally suspend the normal certification process and selectively certify on the basis of race or sex when an agency has a poor EEO record.
- ...Study the possibility of using cultural knowledge as a quality ranking factor in certain meet/deal positions.
- ...Try the OFCC approach on a pilot basis for Federal Agencies, that is, require numerical goals and timetables. (Contact: Linda Brick, OP, ext. 73547.)

AMENDMENT OF USDA CONDUCT REGULATIONS.....Signed by Secretary Butz on June 9 and published in Federal Register on June 15 (41 FR 116, pp.24107-24109). Assistant General Counsel, Legislation, Litigation, Research and Operations, J. Michael Kelly, will be the Department's Ethics Counselor. The regulations provide for:

- ...Annual discussions of regulations with all employees at time of performance evaluation. Employees will certify that discussion took place.
- ...Approval to be obtained in advance for all outside employment except for some limited exceptions.
- ...Close scrutiny on the purchase of products or services from any person having official business dealings with the employee.
- ...Obligation of all employees to assist authorized Department representatives during official inquiries except where protected by the Fifth Amendment. (Contact: Clyde Fisk, OP, ext. 77654.)

HOURS OF DUTY.....Copies of the June 10 memorandum from the Assistant Secretary for Administration to all employees dealt with the need to exercise tighter control over the hours of work. Supervisors have been instructed to set an example for proper working hours and take corrective action when necessary. Extension of present working hours could result from lack of adherence to present guidelines. (Contact: Clyde Fisk, OP, ext. 77654.)

OMB REVIEW OF SPRING A-11 SUBMISSIONS.....OMB reviewed the Spring A-11 ADP submissions with ADS, APHIS, FAS, FS and ARS. Areas covered in the agencies' discussions included:

- ...Process for developing A-11.
- ...Program management involvement in A-11 development
- ...Tracking data processing expenditures during the FY
- ...Translation of program requirements into data processing requirements
- ...How data processing fits into long range agency program plans
- ...Review agency data processing plans to include justification for A-11 element based on program needs. (Contact: H. Meetze, ADS, ext. 76275.)

CONGRESSIONAL ADP HEARINGS.....House Subcommittee on Legislation for National Security begins Hearings on June 28 on PL 89-306 (Brooks Bill). Data processing responsibilities of GSA, OMB and NBS resulted from this PL. Representatives from GAO, GSA, OMB, NBS and several computer associations will appear before the Subcommittee. Federal procurement of ADP resources will be discussed. Hearings are to determine effectiveness of Federal operations under PL 89-306 and if legislative changes are required.

Senator Ribicoff, Chairman of the Committee on Government Operations is holding staff hearings on data processing in the Federal Government. Hearings resulted from GAO reports covering physical security, automated decision-making systems and computer related crimes. Formal hearings to begin this Fall. (Contact: H. Meetze, ADS, ext. 76275.)

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OA IMPLEMENTING RAPID SYSTEM.....To collect and store, centrally at NAL, all reports containing conditions with nationwide impact on the efficiency and effectiveness of USDA programs. RAPID systems will provide USDA managers with quick library index reports and access and review. A memo explaining the system, its purpose and how it will operate will be issued shortly. (Contact: Bob Beuley, OA, ext. 77805.)

AGRICULTURE APPROPRIATIONS.....June 16 House passed H.R. 14237 making appropriations for Agriculture and Related Agencies for FY 77. Rejected a motion to recommit the bill to the Committee on Appropriations with instructions to report back with an amendment containing across-the-board cuts. Rejected amendments to:

- ...limit the peanut subsidy for the 76 and 77 crop to \$59 million
- ...reduce the food stamp program by \$794,400,000
- ...prohibit the use of funds for carrying out PL 480 sales to India
- ...prohibit use of PL 480 funds for the purchase or exportation of tobacco

On June 23 Senate passed H.R. 14237 making appropriations for Agriculture and Related Agencies for FY 77. The Senate Bill provides \$11,912,202,000 in new budget (obligational) authority which is \$460,275,000 more than the House Bill and \$701,543 more than the 1977 budget estimates. Conferee action should be completed prior to the Congressional recess on July 2. (Contact: Bob Sherman, OMF, ext. 76176.)

LEGISLATIVE ITEMS OF INTEREST.....

- ...USDA Overseas Training. The House passed S. 3052, providing overseas orientation and foreign language training for families of USDA employees scheduled for foreign assignments.
- ...Wool Act Amendments. Were signed by the President on June 21. This law (PL 94-312) amends retroactively regulations pertaining to the computation of price support payments under the Wool Act of 1954
- ...Horse Protection Act. The House passed on June 21 an amended version of S. 811, which prohibits the soring of horses.
- ...House granted rules on three agriculture bills:
H.R. 10133, upgrading the position of the Under Secretary and certain other USDA officials.
H.R. 11743, the National Agricultural Research Policy Act of 1976.
H.R. 12944, a 6 months extension of the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act. (Contact: OMF's Legislative Financial Reporting Division, ext. 74654.)

CORRECTION-CENTRAL ANSWERING UNIT INFORMATION.....For information concerning USDA's controlled correspondence unit for the Secretary, call Pat Ryan, ext. 73157.

NEXT MANAGEMENT COUNCIL MEETING.....Discussion of Departmental policy on Within-Grade Increases that was scheduled for the last meeting will be covered in a special meeting at 2:00 P.M. on July 1. ✓